Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5564th meeting

Thursday, 9 November 2006, 3.15 p. m.

New York

President:	Mr. Voto-Bernales	(Peru)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Li Junhua
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Mr. Kaarsbo
	France	Mr. Faivre
	Ghana	Mr. Christian
	Greece	Mr. Vidouris
	Japan	Mr. Omura
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Bader
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sitnikov
	Slovakia	Mr. Babicz
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Salaita
	United States of America	Mr. Brencick

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

Letter dated 6 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/868)

Letter dated 7 November 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/869)

Letter dated 8 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2006/871)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-61024 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.25 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Brazil, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Arab Emirates in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 9 November 2006 from the representative of Qatar in which he requests that an invitation be extended, pursuant to rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, to His Excellency Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States to the United Nations, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Mahmassani to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

As I indicated in this morning's session, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Shukurov (Azerbaijan): Mr. President, in my capacity as the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Group at the United Nations, I would like to inform you that the OIC Group adopted the following statement on 7 November, in response to the recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, which I would like to read:

> "The OIC Group at the United Nations met at the ambassadorial level in New York on 7 November 2006 to discuss the continued deterioration of the situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territory as a result of the military aggression being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power in the Gaza Strip.
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> "The OIC Group at the United Nations expressed its grave concern at the continued deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967 during the recent period, particularly as a result of the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel, the occupying Power, which has caused extensive loss of civilian Palestinian life and injuries, including among children and women.
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> "The OIC Group at the United Nations condemned in particular the military assaults being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power in the Gaza Strip, which has caused loss of life and extensive destruction of Palestinian property and vital infrastructure.
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> "The OIC Group at the United Nations emphasizes the need to preserve the institutions of the Palestinian National Authority and Palestinian infrastructure and properties.
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> "The OIC Group at the United Nations expressed grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and called for the provision of emergency assistance to them.
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> "The OIC Group at the United Nations decided to call for the convening of the Security Council's meeting on this issue and urged the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the preservation of international peace and security, by taking the following measures.
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> "First: demanding that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately cease its aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the occupied

Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and immediately withdraw its forces from within the Gaza Strip to positions held prior to 28 June 2006.

"Second: calling for an immediate ceasefire between the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

"Third: calling also for the establishment and dispatch of a United Nations observer force to supervise the ceasefire.

"Fourth: calling upon Israel, the occupying Power, to scrupulously abide by its obligations and responsibilities under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949.

"The OIC Group at the United Nations called upon the international community, including the Quartet, to take immediate steps, including confidence-building measures between the parties, with the objective of resuming peace negotiations and restarting the peace process in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

"The OIC Group at the United Nations decided to endorse the draft resolution tabled by the Arab Group at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee under agenda item 32, entitled 'Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip'."

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Let me begin by extending the felicitations of the Pakistan delegation on Peru's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. It is particularly gratifying to see an old friend back in New York. We would also like to extend our congratulations to Ambassador Kenzo Oshima and the Japanese delegation for a very successful and active presidency last month.

We appreciate the decision of the Security Council to hold this emergency meeting in response to the call by the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. It is perhaps a measure of the impunity enjoyed by Israel that, even as the Council decided to meet, additional horrendous actions took place, such as yesterday's action in Beit Hanoun, which killed 18 members of a family, including 8 children and 7 women. We join the call for an independent international investigation into this incident and its implications for the violations of international humanitarian law.

This slaughter comes in the wake of the images of unarmed Palestinian women being fired at and killed in the streets of Gaza. These images represent the ugly faces of occupation, sustained by indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force and utter disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law.

It is unfortunate that the momentary sense of optimism generated last year by the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza quickly dissipated into despair and renewed violence. Hopelessness and violence have both risen sharply in recent months. Each passing day of violence and reprisals is a setback to the quest for a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question and durable peace in the Middle East.

After the devastating conflict in Lebanon earlier this year, which raged while the Security Council watched helplessly for 30 days, it became obvious that a comprehensive approach was essential to bringing about a durable peace and stability in the Middle East. A high-level delegation of the League of Arab States came to this Council last September with an important initiative — to bring an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to achieve comprehensive peace through the revival of the peace process and negotiations. It is unfortunate that the Security Council did not deem it appropriate to take any follow-up action on that initiative and on the strong commitment for peace which it embodied. No wonder there is a crying need for the Council to restore its credibility.

We must address all the festering problems of the region comprehensively and fairly. It is time to end Israel's conflicts with all its neighbours. It is time, first and foremost, to end the tragedy of Palestine, which is at the core of the Middle East conflict and the major source of the humiliation, anger and desperation that is felt by people throughout the Muslim world. Given the human suffering, given the threat to international peace and security, and given the responsibility entrusted to this Council by the Charter, this Council must respond to the call of the Arab and Islamic world for an immediate ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territories — a ceasefire which is credible, sustainable and verifiable.

To this end, Pakistan would urge the two sides, Israel and the Palestinians, to take a series of immediate and simultaneous confidence-building measures.

To Israel, we ask that it immediately end its military campaign in Gaza; release Palestinian prisoners, including cabinet members and legislators; remove checkpoints and other obstacles to facilitate access and movement of civilians and humanitarian workers; halt and reverse construction of the separation wall; freeze settlement activities and dismantle outposts constructed in the West Bank since 2001; release customs and back payments to the Palestinian Authority; and accept negotiations with the Palestinian Authority led by President Mahmoud Abbas.

To our Palestinian brothers, we also appeal that they halt rocket attacks and violence, secure release of the captured Israeli soldier, achieve internal cohesion and establish a national unity Government, with authority given to the Palestinian Authority and to President Abbas to negotiate with Israel.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Middle East is a great challenge. President Musharraf has stated that the greatest challenge to global security, to the campaign against terrorism, to the promotion of harmony among civilizations and to the credibility of the United Nations is the cauldron of conflict that is the Middle East. We must put out these fires.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to address you, Mr. President, and other members of the Security Council in order to express our appreciation for your quick response in holding this urgent meeting on behalf of the Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement to consider the serious developments that are taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Let me also congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank your predecessor, the Ambassador of Japan, for his presidency last month.

The Security Council is meeting today in light of the serious Israeli military escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Tunisia has followed with concern this brutal Israeli aggression against the northern Gaza Strip, which has caused many victims among the Palestinian people — women, children and the elderly. The most recent were victims of the bombing yesterday in Beit Hanoun, which also destroyed infrastructure.

This escalation clearly is a serious threat to the security and stability of the Middle East region. In a communication from the Foreign Ministry issued on 4 November 2006, Tunisia condemned repeated Israeli acts of aggression. They are a grave violation of all laws, norms and international legality. This Israeli aggression against Palestinian territories is being pursued at a time when the Palestinian people and international public opinion are seeking to resume talks between Israelis and Palestinians in order to reinvigorate the peace process, with a view to bringing about a comprehensive settlement to this conflict, and to spare the region and its peoples further war and suffering.

Violence begets violence. It fuels feelings of hatred and despair. There is no other choice for the parties than the choice of peace and a return to negotiations. We reiterate the invitation to Israel to end its acts of oppression and aggression. We believe that it is high time for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in order to put an end to the violations that the Palestinian people are subjected to. The Council must take the necessary measures to create an international force to protect Palestinian civilians, in keeping with the call from President Ben Ali of the Republic of Tunisia. In this regard, we hope the Council will adopt the Arab draft resolution on this matter in order to end this bloodshed and the dangers that still threaten the future of the region.

Mr. Abdalhaleem (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations for presiding over the Council this month. We value the active role of your country, Peru, on the international scene. The recent Latin American-Arab Summit bears witness to that important and vital role. We look forward to its continuation during the coming summit meeting of Africa and Latin America.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the previous President, the representative of Japan, for his wise management of the work of the Council during the last month.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group, the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

My country is following with serious concern the development of the situation in the Palestinian territories and the military practices of the occupying authority, in which it uses internationally prohibited weapons against populated areas and continues to destroy and demolish houses and Arab land. It is also imposing a policy of starvation and siege on the Gaza Strip for lengthy periods, which will lead to further deterioration and instability in the region and will make it very difficult to reach a permanent peace.

Since the Palestinian people have freely elected a national Government in a clear, democratic environment, it has been subjected to collective punishment because of its democratic choice. Israeli policies and practices in the Gaza Strip have led to a horrific deterioration in economic, social and humanitarian conditions. More than 900,000 Palestinian civil servants have been affected by the halt of external assistance to the Government. Israel has not paid what it owes in taxes, customs and tariffs to the Palestinian Authority, which is now more than $500,000,000. Checkpoints and closures have led to the destruction of Palestinian exports, the bankruptcy of companies and displacement of their employees. Other practices have besieged the Palestinian people and destroyed their will to stand up to the occupier, a steadfastness that they have shown for five decades.

Last week, Israeli tanks killed tens of Palestinians, including a large number of women and children, and injured hundreds in Beit Hanoun, in Gaza, in a brutal attack on unarmed civilians, who were mowed down mercilessly by Israeli tanks. This incident is a continuation of the aerial bombardment that Israel is carrying out against residential areas, in addition to the extrajudicial killings and arbitrary targeting of civilians, demolition of homes, destruction of infrastructure and arrest and detention of democratically elected officials. Even children were not spared prisons. The report of the Committee points to tens — in fact, hundreds — of Palestinian children who have been detained and imprisoned in Israel.

In the West Bank, despite the clear and explicit advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that stipulates halting the construction of the separation wall, the Israeli occupying authority continues to construct the wall and build more than 550 barricades. Israel practises all forms of intransigence, which is reported by all forms of media and is having the worst effect on Palestinian citizens, particularly the sick, the disabled and the students and those who are facing the worst kind of collective punishment and abuse by Israeli soldiers. They suffer beating, have their clothes removed and are forced to sit in mud or stand for long hours under the sun or experience exposure to cold weather and all forms of torture.

The political positions that give the Zionist entity the unjust right to continue its barbaric aggression against the defenceless Palestinian people under the pretext of self-defence unjustly support this explicit aggression. They give free rein to the Zionist entity to continue its atrocities against the Palestinians.

My country condemns this aggressive Zionist attitude and calls upon the Security Council, the international community, all human rights institutions and all peace-loving people to move urgently to condemn this aggression and to put an end, by all means possible, to the inhumane practices that are perpetrated daily by Israel against the steadfast Palestinian people.

The time has come for the international community, the Security Council in particular, to shoulder its responsibility vis-à-vis the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the indescribable suffering of civilians. Decisive steps should be taken immediately to force Israel to implement resolutions of international legitimacy and to put an end to Israeli practices against the unarmed Palestinian people and their property by stopping its aggression in occupied Palestinian territories and Jerusalem. Israel should withdraw immediately from the Gaza Strip. An international investigative committee should be established to look into the massacre that was perpetrated by the Israeli forces on 8 November 2006 in Beit Hanoun. Relevant United Nations agencies and other organizations should send emergency humanitarian assistance to the needy in the occupied territory and force Israel to provide full compensation for the harm that has befallen the Palestinians.

The international community, represented here in this Council, should take immediate and urgent measures to protect the Palestinian people and to force

Israel to implement without delay the General Assembly's and the Council's resolutions that are based on its withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967.

We would like to remind Security Council members that Israel is the only country in the world that has no borders. That is because it is an entity based on expansion.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like first to congratulate you and your friendly country, Peru, on presiding over the Council this month, and I wish you every success. I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the representative of Japan, for his efforts and wisdom in guiding the work of the Council last month.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group, Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. All previous speakers have voiced the same concern that Morocco feels with respect to the occupied Palestinian territories. We would like to reiterate some of these concerns, because we are interested in developments in the Middle East conflict, particularly the Palestine-Israel component.

We strongly denounce the Israeli attacks on Gaza, particularly the bombardment of Beit Hanoun on 8 November by the Israel Defense Forces, causing the deaths of civilians, including women and children. We are shocked by this act of aggression, which cannot be justified. We convey our condolences to our brothers in Palestine, while reiterating our feelings of solidarity with them and our full support and hope that they will regain their rights.

At the same time, we voice our indignation at the Israeli Government's escalation of violence against the defenceless Palestinian people and its continuous targeted killing, collective punishment, the destruction of economic and social infrastructure, the kidnapping of freely elected Government officials and the economic and security blockade of the territories. These are all flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, human rights and all agreements and treaties, including the Fourth Geneva Convention relevant to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Confronted with this military pressure in the Palestinian territories, and noting Israel's overt intention to continue this kind of aggression, we call upon Israel to learn the bitter lesson of its attack on Lebanon last summer. The logic of force is incapable of solving political issues. It leads only to more violence and counter-violence. It threatens stability in the entire region and deeply separates peoples who can coexist only with mutual respect.

The Kingdom of Morocco rejects any and all acts of violence against civilians regardless of who perpetrates them. Here, we appeal for restraint in order to spare the region the disasters of further escalation. Given the complications in this situation and the growing tension between the parties, Morocco believes we can act to restore communication between the parties in order to revive the peace process. We insist that this is linked to genuine political will on both sides. We would like to recall that the Arab party at the Security Council ministerial-level meeting on 21 September declared its honest and sincere desire for peace and the steps to attain it.

Morocco would like to point out all the efforts that have been made regionally and internationally to move ahead with the peace process. We reiterate the need for the parties to back up their words with action in order to restore confidence by taking effective measures that lead to the resumption of negotiations. An immediate ceasefire would be the first step, followed by abstaining from anything that could ratchet up tension, stopping the isolation of the Palestinians, ending the unjustified siege, freeing Palestinian funds and tax money, and providing moral and material support for efforts to create a unity Government that would serve as a partner in the peace process. It goes without saying that those efforts require the full and clear support of the international community. In this regard, the Security Council, more than ever, has a responsibility to maintain international peace and security in the region.

The draft resolution before the Council contains first steps and measures, in particular the invitation for a complete end to active aggression against the Palestinian people and the sending of international observers.

Putting an end to violence is a priority, but we also have to address the essential political facets. In that connection, the Quartet has a particular responsibility to create momentum in the peace process. We must look at the Palestinian track from the economic and humanitarian perspectives and must consider effective political measures that can produce a resumption of negotiations, not only on the Palestine-Israel track, but also on the other two tracks: Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon.

We reaffirm the importance of the primary terms of reference on which the peace process is based: the Road Map, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1402 (2002) and 1515 (2003). Some of those terms of reference set out clearly defined objectives within a clearly defined timetable, in order to bring the parties closer to a solution.

Although the Israel-Palestine conflict is the mother and the core of the Arab-Israel conflict, we will not achieve lasting and comprehensive peace in the region without continuous and parallel efforts on all fronts. Peaceful coexistence among all the peoples and religions of the Middle East will make it possible for peace and love to prevail over hatred, through the creation of two States living side by side in peace: Israel and independent Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

I reaffirm my Government's full support for all efforts to revive the peace process and to spare the region any more years of a conflict that has already lasted far too long.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. De Palacio España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to tell you, Sir, how happy I am to see you among us again, now as President of the Security Council for the month of November. I wish you every success in that task. I also welcome the initiative to hold this open debate; it is fully justified by the gravity of the situation in the Middle East, in particular in the occupied territories.

Spain fully endorses the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

The Middle East is presently undergoing the worst crisis in years as a direct consequence of the recent war in Lebanon and the prolonged violence in the occupied territories. We are gravely concerned about the growing violence between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as confrontations among Palestinians. International peace plans and regional initiatives are at a standstill, which poses serious risks for international peace and security.

Nevertheless, precisely because the use of war as an instrument to resolve conflicts in the region has been shown to be useless, Spain believes it is urgent that we commit ourselves to working jointly with regional actors and the international community in order to achieve a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The situation brooks no delay. The opportunity provided by resolution 1701 (2006) will not last much longer.

We believe that two parallel steps must be carried out: on the one hand, concrete action in the region to create an atmosphere more propitious to peace through short-term and medium-term measures; and, on the other hand, the promotion of international consensus to launch a peace initiative that addresses all tracks — Israeli, Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian — and includes all actors, in order to overcome the current deadlock.

Among the first set of measures that are more short-term and should generate trust among the parties, we think that the immediate liberation of soldiers and prisoners and the release of Palestinian tax revenues retained by Israel should be carried out. Moreover, a border management system should be established that makes it possible to harmonize legitimate security concerns with the need to facilitate the circulation of goods and persons. In addition, there must be support for the Palestinian Authority in its efforts to form a Palestinian Government with which the international community can fully cooperate.

Let us not forget that without preconditioning the political process on the security situation, we must put an immediate end to violence through a commitment by the parties to refrain from striking out against each other, with a view to reopening the channels for dialogue.

However, we must be realistic and accept that in the present circumstances, it is unlikely that the parties to the conflict will take the initiative. Spain therefore believes that, in the longer term, peacebuilding will require the convening of an international conference to demonstrate political commitment to a renewed peace process. Here, it would also be necessary to reactivate the Road Map, and to ensure greater participation by regional actors in the activities of the Quartet.

Spain believes that the meeting of the Mediterranean Forum, held on 27 and 28 October 2006 in Alicante, Spain, was a good starting point in efforts to achieve such a consensus. In the final declaration, Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation from countries on both sides of the Mediterranean, members of the Forum, agreed on the elements I have set out, as well as about the need to set in motion a renewed multilateral process involving all of the relevant actors to facilitate negotiations among all the parties on all the tracks.

Such negotiations must be based on the terms of reference accepted by all of the parties at the 1991 Madrid Conference and on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, as well as on clearly defined parameters on the solution of final status issues. That set of measures, at the local, regional and international levels and within a political context that makes it possible to reconcile the parties, are the way to emerge from the current deadlock and achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): This meeting takes place against the backdrop of yesterday's Israeli military action in Gaza. The numbers are indisputable and shocking: 19 Palestinians were killed in Beit Hanoun alone, a majority of them women and children. Our condolences go to those who lost loved ones. Norway condemns this massive use of military force by the Israel Defense Forces in their attempts to stop the firing of home-made rockets from Gaza.

Since June this year, more than 300 Palestinians have lost their lives, many of them children. Countless others have suffered injuries and have been left homeless and traumatized. Along with the damaging effects of the Israeli military action, the overall humanitarian situation in Gaza is becoming more and more critical, increasing human suffering and undermining the prospects for peace.

Norway's Minister for Foreign Affairs was in Gaza yesterday and could see for himself the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation and the widespread destruction left behind by the recent Israeli military campaign. In Gaza, my Minister met with President Abbas; he also met with Israel's Minister for Foreign Affairs. He brought with him a clear message: while Norway recognizes Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens, we cannot accept military retaliation that is so disproportionate and contrary to international humanitarian law. Actions such as yesterday's serve only to cultivate hatred and to reinforce continued armed resistance. That is not the way to improve Israel's security. There is no military solution to this conflict, and we urge Israel to end its incursions into Gaza.

It is also our long-standing position that the Palestinian leadership must bring an end to the firing of rockets into Israeli territory. Such acts of terror serve neither the Palestinian population nor the prospects for peace. We also urge the Palestinian leadership to provide for the safe return of the kidnapped Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit.

Norway supports the efforts of President Abbas to establish a Government of national unity reflecting the principles set out by the Quartet. We strongly encourage all parties and the international community to support those efforts. The road to peace starts at the negotiating table. Only a process of negotiations can bring about a comprehensive settlement based on the Road Map, the commitments made at Sharm el-Sheikh and all relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Yousfi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to express to you, Sir, my delegation's sincere congratulations on the assumption of the Security Council presidency by your country, Peru, for the month of November and to wish you every success in carrying out that mission. I also thank you for having convened this meeting. Likewise, I should like to congratulate Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, Permanent Representative of Japan, on his successful guidance of the work of the Council during the past month. My thanks go also to Ms. Angela Kane, Assistant

Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for her briefing on the tragic events currently taking place in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip.

The difficult circumstances and the gravity of the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory give this Security Council meeting particular importance. They offer my delegation an opportunity to express its deep concern and to condemn most energetically the most recent Israeli aggression, which has caused the cruel loss of innocent human lives, including those of women and children, as well as significant destruction of basic infrastructure in the Palestinian territory, in flagrant violation of international legality.

The Israeli army's latest incursion into the Gaza Strip, characterized by the abusive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population, is taking place at a difficult time when the Palestine Authority, facing serious challenges, is working to find a solution to the governmental crisis. Since the beginning of the year, that crisis has served as an additional pretext for Israel to strengthen its blockade of the Palestinian territory and to transform the Gaza Strip into a vast prison for an already sorely tested civilian population.

Today, it is very symbolic to note that Israel's latest aggression against the Palestinian people is taking place at the very time when the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee is discussing precisely the issue of the tragic human rights situation in the occupied Arab territories, and to note that Israel is committing this inexcusable massacre — there is no other word to describe it — of the innocent civilian population in Beit Hanoun on the very day when the Committee is concluding its general debate on that issue, while Israel is announcing with great fanfare its withdrawal from the martyred city following several days of massacre and destruction. That shows Israel's scorn for the international community and its lack of interest in the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and in respect for international legality.

The impunity with which Israel, itching for war, periodically launches army attacks in Palestinian cities and villages against an exhausted and defenceless civilian population, without arousing any reaction on the part of the international community, and puts forward unacceptable and fallacious pretexts to justify its aggression, must be firmly condemned and denounced by the international community. History will not pardon complicit silence, which is interpreted as an encouragement for the criminal activities of the Israeli army.

Following its Operation Summer Rains, carried out last summer, with its trail of destruction and innocent victims, including women and even children, Israel recently returned with its Operation Autumn Clouds, as if to create the impression that its army is not engaged in a barbaric aggression against the Palestinian population, but rather is taking actions for which the international community is asked to show its indulgence, if not its admiration. At this rate, my delegation is entitled to ask whether it is planned that the skies will someday clear up for occupied Palestine and whether the quest for peace is really on the agenda of the international community, particularly the Security Council.

The right to self-defence and the fight against terrorism have been held up, abusively and ad nauseam, as pretexts enabling Israel to commit its excesses, which are reprehensible and contrary to international legality. Those excesses do not spare Palestinian institutions, political figures — who have been abruptly imprisoned for no apparent reason — basic infrastructure or, above all, the civilian population, which is subjected to daily humiliation. The Palestinian people's exercise of its free democratic choice in 2006 seems to have given Israel an additional reason to carry out collective punishment against a people whose latest transgression appears to have been to democratically choose its leaders.

The gravity of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory causes my delegation to appeal forcefully to the Security Council to end its apparent complacency regarding Israel's repeated attacks against the Palestinian people, to shoulder its Charter responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to exert the pressure necessary to compel Israel to immediately end its aggression against the Palestinian people and withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip. The Council must also impose a ceasefire and compel Israel to comply strictly with its obligations under the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

My delegation remains convinced that, given the current impasse in the Middle East peace process, the United Nations must once again take up that issue and shoulder its full responsibility in the quest for a settlement to the conflict. The relevant Security Council resolutions — particularly resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which remain fully valid — are the foundations for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace that ensures respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and its right to create an independent, viable State living side by side in peace with its neighbours.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Badji (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for November. I am confident that, under your skilful guidance, the Council's work will be carried out constructively and effectively.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his outstanding leadership of the Council in October.

I thank you, Sir, and the other members of the Council for giving me the opportunity, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in this important debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

We meet today in the Security Council to consider the deeply disturbing events that have taken place in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. We all know what happened. Nineteen Palestinians were killed in the early morning yesterday when Israeli forces fired artillery rounds on six houses in a city where most people were still asleep. Seven children and six women were among those killed. Some 53 other people were wounded, including 25 children and 12 women. According to certain sources, the Israeli military operation in that region, which began on 1 November, has already claimed 77 lives.

The Israeli army's continued excessive use of force in the occupied Palestinian territories constitutes an act of war against the Palestinian people. The use of tanks, aircraft and combat helicopters, as well as missiles and artillery guns, is clearly and blatantly disproportionate. The number of Palestinian civilian victims, including innocent women and children among the killed and injured, continues to grow.

The Committee has also urged the Palestinian militants to cease firing Qassam rockets into Israel from northern Gaza, which provoked the violent response of the Israeli army. Nothing whatsoever can justify those acts, which violate international law.

The tragic developments in the situation have dashed the faint remaining hopes of the Palestinian leaders of finding a way to resume dialogue and revive the peace negotiations. Not only has the Palestinian people, which is already living in horrendous conditions, been further downtrodden and humiliated; it must also deal with dangers that grow day by day.

The latest Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank has gone virtually unnoticed by the international community, as have the ongoing building of settlements and the separation wall and the serious humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and Gaza. We urge Israel, the occupying Power, immediately to end its military operations, to conduct a credible in-depth inquiry into yesterday's horrific incident, and to act in conformity with the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War by protecting Palestinians. We call on both parties immediately to cease all acts of violence and to show the utmost restraint in order for calm to be restored.

The Committee believes that the Security Council needs to shoulder its Charter responsibilities and help to end the bloodshed and suffering in the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel must end its military incursions into Palestinian territory and its targeted assassinations of Palestinians. It must also lift the severe restrictions that have imposed untold daily suffering and difficulties on the Palestinian people.

For its part, the Committee will continue to work with legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, above all the President of the Palestinian Authority, who support the principles of non-violence, recognize the State of Israel and respect and abide by all previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The Committee also advocates a negotiated settlement to the conflict leading to the emergence of a viable,

democratic and independent Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours. Such a settlement would allow the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to be resolved and the occupation that began in 1967 to end, on the basis of the Madrid conference; the principle of land for peace; Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003); agreements previously concluded between the parties; the Arab peace initiative; and the acceptance of Israel as a neighbour living in peace and security in the context of a comprehensive settlement. Only a comprehensive settlement will enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank you for your quick response in convening this important meeting.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Japan, for his wise stewardship of the Council last month.

The United Arab Emirates aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

My country has closely followed the truly grave humanitarian catastrophe of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, as embodied in the heinous massacre committed in cold blood yesterday morning by the Israeli occupation forces in Beit Hanoun, the Gaza Strip, which killed at least 20 people, 13 of whom were from the same family, and gravely wounded 45 others, mostly women and children.

That criminal and gruesome Israeli act, which is contrary to all international human rights instruments, could have been fully and easily prevented if the Security Council had acted from the first day by calling upon Israel, the occupying Power, to end its open and brutal war against the people of Gaza, including its current attacks.

The continuing inaction on the part of the international community, especially as regards Israel's gross violations of the human rights of the Palestinian and Arab peoples, has not only encouraged Israel to continue its destruction of Palestinian cities and villages and their vital infrastructure; it has also encouraged it to launch ferocious military attacks against unarmed civilians before the eyes of the world. Israel's military attack against Beit Hanoun — which included the deliberate, widespread and barbaric demolition of homes, mass detention, extrajudicial killings and the targeting of ambulances and emergency medical personnel — has, over the past eight days, resulted in more than 70 deaths and the wounding of at least 300 civilians, 20 per cent of whom are in critical condition.

The United Arab Emirates would like to declare its solidarity with the Palestinian people as they face Israeli massacres and other violations that are tantamount to genocide — a crime under international humanitarian law. I wonder how the international community can believe the justification put forth by the representative of Israel this morning that the crimes committed by the Israeli war machine in Beit Hanoun and the occupied Palestinian territories — in which they employed the most lethal of weapons — were acts of self-defence. Israel is committing the most heinous acts of killing and oppression in violation of international instruments and norms and in total disregard for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to live in dignity, peace, stability and security in their homeland, like all other peoples of the world. We therefore reiterate our earlier position that Israel's ongoing contempt for, and violation of, its obligations under United Nations resolutions, international law, human rights covenants and previous agreements concluded with the Palestinians will not bring about security and stability for the Israeli people. Rather, they will lead to increasing frustration among Palestinians and will escalate violence and tension in the entire region.

We therefore call upon the international community, and the Security Council and the Quartet in particular, to take urgent steps to condemn Israel's actions, urgently act to investigate those actions, bring the perpetrators to international justice, compel Israel to pay the necessary compensation and ensure that it strictly commits itself to halting its ongoing attacks against the Palestinian people, especially given the current conditions in the occupied territories, which have become very dire. Necessary measures should

also be taken to ensure following: protection for the Palestinian people; the lifting of Israeli blockades; Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza and all other Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif; and Israel's commitment to the implementation of all the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention in all the territories, in accordance with its legal obligations under the Convention and in line with United Nations resolutions and the relevant norms of international law.

In conclusion, while we hope that the international community will not once again fail to take decisive steps to prevent the escalation of violence and tension in the Palestinian territories and the broader Middle East region, we also wish to emphasize that peace, cooperation and stability in the region will not be achieved without a demonstration of the international community's serious determination to guarantee an end to Israeli aggression, to help the Palestinian people establish a Government of national unity and to provide that Government with the financial and economic assistance necessary to rebuild the vital State institutions that have been destroyed and to overcome the current serious humanitarian crisis. That would pave the way for the establishment of an environment conducive to the continuation of peace negotiations to find a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the overall situation in the Middle East in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative, which supports the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual respect.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Yahya Mahmassani, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations.

Mr. Mahmassani (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, first of all, to convey our congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for November. I also wish to express our gratitude to the Permanent Representative of Japan for his stewardship of the Council last month. We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Angela Kane for her briefing to the Security Council this morning.

The escalation of Israel's serious and continuous military operations in occupied Palestinian territory is a continuation of Israel's established policy to use military force to dictate a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. That approach has proved futile and has only resulted in further bloodshed and destruction. The League of Arab States condemns Israel's acts of aggression against the Palestinian people as well as its brutal invasion of the Gaza Strip. That action has already claimed numerous Palestinians lives, due, in part, to unrestrained firing upon Palestinian civilians in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip. We also condemn the use by Israeli forces of internationally prohibited weapons against Palestinians and its deliberate destruction of vital Palestinian infrastructure. We believe that the continuation of Israel's acts of aggression will result in a further escalation of an already tense and complex situation in the region. That will, in turn, hinder efforts aimed at finding a peaceful resolution of the problem.

Israel's continued acts of aggression on Palestinian territory and against the Palestinian people are further evidence of Israel's intention to be neither a real participant in the peace process nor a contributor to regional stability. The international community, and especially the Security Council, should therefore seriously consider the Arab request to work towards the revival of the peace process. We wonder why it is that the Quartet, which has been entrusted with following the situation in Palestine, has not yet played its role in that regard and call upon it to play its proper role in the peace process.

We also call upon the Secretary-General to establish a fact-finding commission to investigate Israel's ongoing acts of aggression in the occupied Palestinian territories, which are in violation of international law, as well as to submit a report to the Security Council on this matter as soon as possible.

It is obvious that the events unfolding before our eyes today reflect the tragic collapse of the entire peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Israel's logic of using force as the only course of action cannot lead to a resolution of this conflict. In our view, the only viable option to bring about peace is a return to the negotiating table by both the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my profound gratitude to you, Mr. President, for responding to the request by the States of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Islamic and Arab Groups to hold this important meeting to

discuss the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories that has resulted from Israel's acts of aggression against the Gaza Strip.

We believe that the speedy response by the Security Council in discussing these developments represents a recognition of the seriousness of the situation in the occupied territories and of its negative impact on peace and security in the Middle East region and in the world as a whole. We hope that the Council will shoulder its responsibilities and take urgent measures to put an end to Israeli acts of aggression such as those that occurred recently, which killed dozens of people and injured many more.

Israeli practices in the occupied territories have reached a level of intensity that cannot be ignored. Military incursions into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have become routine, and the death of civilians, including women, children and the elderly, hardly attracts the attention of the international community, which should call on it to halt or prevent such practices, which violate the norms of international law. Israeli forces have in the past few days carried out massacres in Beit Hanoun and in other parts of the occupied territories, the most recent of which occurred yesterday and in which nearly 20 martyrs were killed, most of them women and children.

Even more surprising are the statements made by Israeli officials to the effect that the recent massacre was due to a technical failure. These acts of aggression are perpetrated under the pretext of self-defence. That is a flimsy justification, and the fact that some accept it raises questions as to their credibility and neutrality. It is unreasonable to attempt to justify Israeli practices in the occupied territories — practices that violate Israel's obligations under international humanitarian law — by saying that they constitute acts of self-defence, because those who are really defending themselves are the Palestinian people, who are resisting the occupation.

Can civilized countries that champion and defend human rights and are bound by the provisions of relevant international agreements and conventions accept such acts? The list includes extrajudicial killings; the disproportionate and excessive use of force; the demolition of homes; the destruction of Palestinian institutions; and the continued construction of the separation wall, despite the emphasis by the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion dated 9 July 2004, of the illegality of the wall given that it contravenes internationally binding resolutions by imposing restrictions on the mobility of Palestinians in the occupied territories and in continuing the policy of siege and collective punishment.

All those practices represent a flagrant and explicit violation of the provisions of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War. We believe that the Contracting Parties and those who adhere to that Convention are obligated to implement its provisions and condemn those practices rather than ignore them.

Kuwait strongly condemns the military aggression that is being carried out by the occupying Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip, which has led to massive destruction and heavy loss of life. We call for an immediate end to this aggression against civilians and for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian territory. We call also for the establishment of an international mechanism to monitor the ceasefire and urge the international community, as represented in the Security Council, to shoulder its responsibility to rein in the Israeli Government by taking immediate measures to protect the civilian population. It must also ensure that such practices do not recur, as that would lead to further deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people and reduce the opportunities for resuming the peace process, which is at a stalemate because of Israel's intransigence, as it continues to reject all initiatives to move the process forward and persists in taking unilateral action.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes its firm and principled stance in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people to realize all of their legitimate political rights and to establish an independent State on their territory, with Al-Quds as its capital. I would like to emphasize that as long as the Palestinian people cannot enjoy their legitimate rights, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative, there can be no just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, which lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli struggle.

On that basis, we call on the international community, including the Quartet, to pressure the Israeli Government to persuade it that there can be no military solution to this question and that the solution lies in the resumption of negotiations and of the peace process, leading to Israel's full withdrawal from the

occupied territories and the implementation of internationally binding resolutions and of the requirements set out in the road map.

The State of Kuwait has great hopes that the Security Council will shoulder its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security and adopt the draft resolution before it, because the Council's continued failure to take measures against Israel will undoubtedly give rise to the feeling that that country has special immunity from international condemnation of its crimes and that it is exempted or excepted from compliance with international conventions and agreements and international law. That would encourage Israel to continue its aggression and its inhuman practices, and thus the vicious circle of violence and instability in the region would continue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Jordan.

Mr. Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): May I offer our congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish also to thank your predecessor, who presided over the Council last month.

The Government of Jordan strongly condemns the aggression committed by Israel against the Palestinian people and its continued military operations in the Gaza Strip, which have recently caused numerous Palestinian victims.

Jordan condemns the horrendous crime committed by Israel in Beit Hanoun on 8 November 2006. We also condemn the policy of collective punishment carried out by Israel against the Palestinians. The Government of Jordan calls on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities in order to put an immediate end to all forms of Israeli aggression and to the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Israeli military operations against the Palestinian people will only heighten tensions and hinder current efforts to lend assistance and end the human suffering being endured by the Palestinian people. We also emphasize the need for urgent action by the international community and influential global Powers so that the peace process can resume and be put back on track. There is a dire need to resume that process as soon as possible.

The deterioration of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and its continued downward spiral threatens more than ever before prospects for the establishment of a Palestinian State as well as security and stability in the region. Israel persists in the commission of heinous acts such as the killing of Palestinians and the occupation of Palestinian territory, the building of settlements, flagrant violations of international law and the continued denial of all Palestinian rights for many decades now. All of these are very serious issues that intensify the suffering of the Palestinian people, fuel forces of extremism and fan the flames of hatred.

The events clearly demonstrate that there will be no unilateral solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The only viable route to a fair resolution is through direct and early negotiations between the two sides to ensure the implementation of United Nations resolutions and of the basic principles of the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative, with a view to establishing an independent, sovereign Palestinian State. All of us, therefore, are duty-bound to continue to support President Abbas and to ensure that international assistance is provided to the Palestinian side.

Furthermore, Israel, for its part, should take immediate steps to put an end to its military operations, keep the Gaza Strip crossing points open, remove restrictions on freedom of movement and release tax revenue owed to the Palestinian side.

We would also like to underscore the need to find a solution to the question of prisoners and abductees, which would help to defuse the tense situation. Israel should show the flexibility that is needed to help revive the political process so that negotiations can be resumed between the two sides. Israel should also take specific, concrete steps to put an end to the occupation. Once again, we urge all the parties concerned to make every possible effort to that end. Bringing about peace and ensuring the establishment of a Palestinian State should remain our basic priority.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you

Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month, and in thanking your predecessor, I would also like to express our appreciation for your decision to convene this urgent meeting of the Security Council to address the latest aggression and atrocities of the Israeli regime.

The international community has witnessed with outrage and indignation yet another round of Israeli aggression and an escalation in its persistent policy and practices of State terrorism and war crimes against the Palestinian people. The recent Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip and in Beit Hanoun, has raged in flagrant defiance of the most basic principles of international law and the fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter. It has been described by the Israeli regime's own officials as one of the largest of its kind against the Gaza Strip, once more displaying for all to see the lawless nature of that regime.

More than 100 Palestinians, including several women and children, have been killed so far; over 350 have been wounded, and many of them are in critical condition. The international community was deeply shocked and appalled to learn that 19 Palestinians, including women and children, were massacred in cold blood, and dozens of others wounded, when the Israeli regime shelled homes in Beit Hanoun yesterday. To add to the misery and suffering of the innocent Palestinian civilians, the Israeli regime has, in many cases, even blocked medical crews from gaining access to the injured and the dead in Beit Hanoun, and has placed hospitals in the area under siege. It has even attacked and killed Red Crescent Society paramedics in the Gaza Strip in yet another flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.

As Palestinian officials have said, the destruction wreaked by the latest Israeli aggression against Beit Hanoun is worse than anything the town has suffered as a result of past Israeli aggression. There is no electricity, the people have no water or food, telephone lines have been cut and infrastructure is damaged.

The magnitude of the crimes of the Israeli regime in Beit Hanoun was partly reflected in the recent statement by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza, which has called the situation there "desperate", adding that

> "Death, destruction and despair are the terms to describe the situation [which] is very grim ... There is destruction and devastation everywhere ... The entire population has been living in fear."

The Israeli aggressors and assassins have callously spared no effort to deprive Palestinian civilians of even their basic necessities and continue to perpetrate crimes and acts of brutality which are reminiscent of the savagery committed in medieval times.

We strongly condemn the aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity and State terrorism of the Zionist regime perpetrated systematically against the Palestinian people over the past six decades. Its recent acts of brutality are equally appalling and must be strongly condemned. It is evident that this latest example of brutality, which, like the numerous previous ones, has targeted civilians and vital civilian infrastructure, is an act of collective punishment and a war crime, carried out in defiance of the most basic principles of international law and international humanitarian law. It is imperative that the international community at long last truly address the situation and prevent these terrorist designs against the Palestinians from continuing.

Regrettably, owing to the inaction imposed on the Security Council by certain permanent members, all of these crimes continue to be committed — there has been no meaningful action by the Council. Indeed, the impunity with which the Israeli regime has carried out its crimes so far has emboldened it to continue and even to increase its aggressive policies and terrorist acts.

The international community and the Security Council must take resolute measures, which are long overdue, to counter these illegal, aggressive and criminal policies and actions by the Israeli regime, to stop its war machine and its acts of State terrorism and to help put an end to the violence brought about by the persistent illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. As the ongoing aggression seriously threatens international peace and security, the Security Council has an enormous responsibility under the Charter to take necessary and prompt steps with a view to putting an end to this aggression. We hope that, recognizing the need for taking decisive action in the face of this new escalation in the region, all members of the

Security Council will live up to their responsibilities in properly addressing this grave situation and, as a first step in this regard, adopt the draft resolution before the Council.

Indeed, the Council should take the calls and concerns of the international community about the Zionist regime's aggressive policies and inhuman practices in the occupied territories more seriously and stop the Israeli regime from insolently making a mockery of the international community and of the Security Council by hypocritically preaching peace here and carrying out acts of terror, horror and barbarism and crimes against humanity in the region, particularly in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Petranto (Indonesia): I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for having convened this urgent meeting. Once again, a brutal series of events is unfolding in Palestine, culminating yesterday in brutal artillery attacks by Israel which killed 19 Palestinian civilians, including children and women, in the Gaza town of Beit Hanoun, and wounded dozens of other innocent civilians.

Before continuing, my delegation would like to express its condolences to the Palestinian people for their terrible and painful losses.

It will be recalled that yesterday, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, spoke with horror of her experience during her visit to the area. She spoke of the despair of people trying to come to terms with death and destruction on a scale not seen in Gaza for many years.

The continued military offensive by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, is a threat to the prospects of achieving a negotiated solution to the conflict based on the two-State solution. In view of these events and the tragic humanitarian situation on the ground, we are deeply concerned that this body has taken no action to intervene.

My delegation once again condemns Israel's aggression and its excessive and disproportionate use of force without any regard for the lives of Palestinians, including innocent women and children. We condemn Israel's policy of collective punishment, which continues to cause extensive loss of life and damage to infrastructure, institutions and property. As a result of these military incursions, the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has become even worse. The deterioration is from an already precarious level of despair, which began with the most recent elections, held earlier this year.

My delegation once again calls on Israel to recognize that there is no military solution to the situation in the Middle East. Israel must resist temptation to exercise its military strength and must stop all aggression against Palestine. Israel must withdraw fully from Gaza and from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as stipulated in General Assembly and Security Council resolutions relevant to the question of Palestine. Furthermore, Israel must abide by its obligation under the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, international law and other rules of humanitarian law.

We are deeply concerned that these flagrant violations of international law continue to be undertaken by Israel. The unfortunate impression is being conveyed that the international community is condoning Israel's behaviour even though this global institution has, on many occasions, called for the rule of law to be respected by all. At the same time, Palestinian militants should stop firing rockets into Israel's territory.

My delegation calls on the Security Council to accept and exercise its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We further urge the Council to express a sense of urgency in view of the terrible humanitarian conditions endured by the Palestinian people as a result of Israel's aggression and its policy of military might.

The Council must make certain that this killing and this wanton destruction of infrastructure do not recur, particularly in view of the fact that, as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has reported, Israeli forces are still present in other parts of Gaza. We also call upon the international community, particularly the Quartet, to take immediate steps to halt the conflict and to revive the peace process towards a just solution, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the United Nations, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002. In this connection, my delegation supports the

draft resolution submitted by Qatar, which we believe serves as a basis for moving forward.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are very happy to see a Peruvian friend, well versed in diplomacy, returning to preside over today's emergency Security Council meeting to consider the current Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the occupied territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

I would like at the outset to align myself with the statements made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group, by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Over the decades, a great deal has been said before the Council about the crimes perpetrated by Israel's Government, army and terrorist gangs in the occupied Arab territories. The collective consciousness of the Security Council is full of innumerable memories of hundreds of long meetings devoted to considering the massacres and the crimes perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Jordanians and the Egyptians.

How many times has the Council considered draft resolutions condemning Israeli massacres? How many times has a well-known State used its veto power to block a collective and otherwise unanimous trend within the Council to condemn Israel for its crimes and hold it responsible for its criminal acts?

The Palestinian question is not a humanitarian issue; it is first and foremost a political issue. As long as we ignore the need to impose a just and comprehensive political solution to this problem, Israel will feel that it is not subject to accountability, that it is allowed to do what nobody else can do and that it is exempt from legal principles. This has led Israel to escalate its aggression against the unarmed Palestinian people under the yoke of occupation and against its immediate neighbours.

It is axiomatic that we must call upon the Council today to put an end to the bleeding of our people, our tragedies, our pain and suffering. It is as though such a call had become a matter of routine for the Security Council and the United Nations. We wonder very seriously about the real reason why Israel dares to continue blindly to kill Palestinians.

Many people, whether they be politicians, diplomats or political analysts, believe that the answer is that some influential Powers in the Security Council have paralysed its capacity to punish Israel for its previous crimes and to hold it accountable to the Council for the State terrorism that has been its foundation since its inception.

Our astonishment increases when some speakers make every effort to turn the facts upside down in asserting that the right of Palestinians to defend themselves, in the face of a brutal and barbaric occupation that has no precedent in history, is itself a form of terrorism, while depicting Israel's terrorism against unarmed Palestinians as legitimate self-defence. Is there a falsification of facts more painful than this? Is it rational that such a falsification should occur within the walls of the Council Chamber?

In July, the delegation of the United States prevented the Security Council from adopting a draft resolution condemning an Israeli massacre similar to the one perpetrated yesterday in Beit Hanoun, namely, the Gaza massacre, even though the draft resolution enjoyed otherwise unanimous support. If the Council had succeeded in condemning Israel's criminal behaviour at that time in July, yesterday's massacre would not have occurred. Those who impede justice and accountability for Israeli war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territory bear a large part of the responsibility for the present shedding of innocent blood there.

The climax of this absurdity is that some have taken to saying that the massacre at Beit Hanoun occurred because of an error, as Israel claims. In fact, we have heard such claims many times before in this Council; we have heard the same pretext used as Israeli justification for killing women, children, members of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and even United Nations staff members. This Israeli justification, which has been totally rejected, demonstrates that Israel is an irresponsible State, not qualified to deal with the international community.

Most speakers have referred to the terms of reference of a just and comprehensive peace: Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. The walls of the Council Chamber reverberate with those terms of reference

because they have been echoed here many times before. The pretexts offered for the continuation of Israeli's occupation and aggression are no longer acceptable. It is as if some were trying to push the region towards despair, towards the unknown and towards an explosion as the only solution. Injustice has long prevailed among the peoples of the region.

It is neither morally nor politically acceptable that, for some, memory should be so short concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict and the suffering of our people under Israeli occupation. Nor is it acceptable that some speakers should call upon Syria to exercise what they call its influence or to play a positive role. Syria's positive role is well known; Syria is part of the solution, not part of the problem. Everyone knows the sincere wish of my country to bring about peace — but a just and comprehensive peace. Everyone knows the will of my country, Syria, to bring about this peace as a strategic option. The problem for those who have any doubts about Syria's role is that they do not want to understand the facts, or even to recognize their own shortcomings and responsibilities, or their short-sightedness in the way they deal with the question of a just peace in the region.

My country is making every possible effort to support the formation of a government of national unity in Palestine. Some might make the error of thinking that the problem lies in this aspect of the Palestinian question. The problem lies in the continued Israeli occupation and aggression against the Palestinian people. That is the core of the problem.

The Arab Group has submitted an emergency draft resolution to be adopted by the Security Council in order to put an end to Israeli massacres in the occupied Palestinian territories. The draft resolution enjoys the direct support of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and most delegations that have spoken today. We would prefer that endorsement of the draft resolution not be limited to those groups. We would like to see other States, from the North, join those that called for and prepared the draft resolution. The issue of justice is not geographic; it is political.

We appeal to all members of the Council to adopt the draft resolution as quickly as possible in order to maintain peace, so that the Council does not send the wrong message to our peoples under occupation that laws are worthless and that violence is the only way to bring about the liberation of occupied lands.

The time has come to send this clear message to Israel: that the continuation of its occupation of the occupied Arab territories will lead to tension in international relations and that it will seriously threaten international peace and security. The time has come for the Council to take action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Council my sincere and profound thanks for convening this emergency meeting to consider the Israeli acts of aggression in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

On behalf of my delegation, I convey our profound and sincere condolences to the Palestinian people with regard to the killing of unarmed civilians in Beit Hanoun in the Gaza Strip as a result of the barbaric and brutal acts committed by the Israeli occupying forces. We express our strong condemnation of the continued Israeli contempt for innocent Palestinian lives, particularly the lives of women and children. This is a clear and flagrant violation of international law and norms and the role of the United Nations and its Security Council. The Council has continued to hold repeated meetings to consider the bloody violence that has been occurring in the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967. The violence is due to continuous Israeli aggression and to the Council's inability to take decisive measures to stop the repetition of such aggression, sometimes because it adopts resolutions that it cannot implement.

The brutal massacre perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces yesterday, which killed elderly people, women and children in Beit Hanoun, was not the first and only massacre in the annals of the occupying Israeli forces, nor will it be the last. It is simply one in a series of massacres perpetrated in Deir Yassin, Kafr Kassim, in Sabra and Shatila, the first Qana incident, Jenin, the Ibrahimi Mosque — the Tomb of the Patriarch in Hebron — the second Qana incident and, finally, in southern Lebanon, in Gaza and now in Beit Hanoun.

Israel has committed those massacres, which have transcended the massacres and atrocities of the Second World War. It is as if the Israelis had not learned the lessons of the past or benefited from international agreements. Israel has refused to receive fact-finding missions and investigative committees to examine its practices that violate the rights of the Palestinian people.

The international community deliberately ignores these Israeli violations and breaches, as manifested in the Security Council's inability to take strict punitive measures. There are those who use self defence as a pretext to justify the practices of the occupation, which has been rejected by all international laws, norms and instruments.

Double standards and double positions, inattention to and overlooking Israeli practices destabilize the credibility of the Security Council and cast doubt on its main role — the maintenance of international peace and security. In fact, they impact the prestige of the United Nations itself and open the door to more tension and aggressive acts. That can threaten security and stability in the region and in the world as a whole.

We convey to the Security Council the requests of the innocent victims to take immediate steps to protect the Palestinian people from the continuous aggression of the Israeli occupying forces, which violates the provisions of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 in particular. We make a strong call for sending an international observer force to provide the needed protection for the Palestinians and their property. We also call for immediate measures to stop repressive and oppressive measures, such as the closing of border crossing points and the siege by Israeli forces that aims at starving the Palestinian people and confining them to a large prison by constructing the separation wall that it has been building in the occupied territories. This threatens the lives of the Palestinian people as a whole; it blackmails and starves the population by preventing assistance from reaching them and by not releasing their due customs and tax revenues.

All efforts and initiatives concerning the Palestinian question since 1948 have not been successful, because they did not deal with the root causes of the problems, namely guaranteeing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

President Muammar Al-Qadhafi has provided a vision of Palestinian and Jewish rights at the same time, through living in one democratic State on an equal footing on the land of Palestine, to be recognized by its neighbours, like what occurred in South Africa. The Israeli Government has always ignored such initiatives, as well as resolutions and agreements of international legitimacy. It has always rejected the principle of investigating acts of violence and destruction that continuously target innocent Palestinian people. Israel justifies its aggressive conduct sometimes as "self defence" and other times as "military mistakes". Israel's objective is to quash the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and their inalienable right to self-determination on their national territory.

The time has come for the Council to shoulder its responsibility vis-à-vis the humanitarian crisis faced by the Palestinian people. We call for serious consideration by the Council of the draft resolution presented by the brotherly State of Qatar on behalf of the Arab Group. This is the least we and you can do here.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): This debate is taking place against the backdrop of an increasingly grave situation in the Middle East. The stalemate in the peace process keeps the whole region under permanent instability, as once again proven by the recent tragic developments.

This situation of virtual diplomatic paralysis fosters the escalation of tension and hostilities and poses a renewed challenge to the Security Council as regards the effectiveness of its reaction, its methods of work and its transparency. It also highlights the need to urgently address the underlying causes of the conflict. Unless prompt and concrete measures are adopted, the Council may be faced with a full-scale crisis beyond its control.

Brazil has often expressed its condemnation of all acts of violence, particularly all forms of terrorism. We have voiced our dismay at the spiral of brutality predicated on retaliation and revenge that characterizes daily life in parts of the Middle East. Too many innocent lives have already been claimed.

In line with that, we call upon the Israeli Government to cease all military operations in Gaza

without delay, and on the Palestinian side to also halt attacks against Israel. We call for a full investigation of the incident that took place yesterday in Beit Hanoun, which, through the constant use of disproportionate force, provoked the death of many innocent civilians.

Peace will not be achieved by merely trying to force a final capitulation. Only the resumption of negotiations that involve all interested parties can result in a just and comprehensive agreement capable of paving the way for a lasting peace to the Arab-Israeli conflict in all its aspects.

Brazil calls upon the international community to lend its continued support for prompt humanitarian action to the Palestinian people, who are now facing one of the most serious humanitarian crises ever.

Particular attention must be paid to the sensitive issue of the large number of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israel. It is critical, as a confidence-building measure, that the Palestinian political leaders now detained in Israel should be promptly released.

Furthermore, we call for the return of the abducted Israeli soldier and the setting up of conditions for achieving a durable solution of the crisis, including the end of the launching of Qassam rockets against the Israeli population.

The creation of a free, democratic and economically viable Palestinian State, in accordance with the legitimate aspirations of its people, living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel, as established in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), and within internationally recognized borders, is a sine qua non condition to ensure lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. Brazil stresses the need to put in motion a political process for the development of a strategy and its pertinent timeline to implement the vision of two States. Such a strategy should take into account the Quartet Road Map, the principle of land for peace derived from the Madrid Conference and the recommendations of the Beirut Arab League summit.

The international community should seize this opportunity to put back on track the Middle East peace process and to end, once and for all, the conflicts that have caused so much suffering and despair. In this regard, I wish to reiterate President Lula's proposal made at the beginning of the current session of the General Assembly to call a broad conference sponsored by the United Nations, with the participation of countries of the region and others that could assist, through their capacities and successful experience, the Middle East countries and peoples in finding ways to live peacefully despite their differences.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of South Africa.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Allow me to join others in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of November and to express our gratitude to Ambassador Oshima of Japan for the able manner in which he conducted the work of the Council during the month of October.

It is with sadness and frustration that we are once again gathered here in response to another attack on innocent civilians. At the outset I would like to reiterate my Government's condolences to President Abbas and the Palestinian people for the loss of life suffered.

My delegation would also like to associate itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The South African Government has expressed deep concern at the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. The recent attacks in Gaza are raising tensions in the region to new dangerous heights, at a time when we would have hoped that all sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be looking at ways to end the negotiation deadlock and move the peace process forward.

The increase in violence is threatening regional and international peace and security and we urge the Security Council, in line with its Charter obligations, to act decisively and to take urgent action to resolve the conflict. My delegation reiterates the position that no party should take unilateral action that seeks to predetermine issues that can only be resolved through negotiation.

We call on the Israeli Government to refrain from that type of action and, as a major military Power in the region, to act with restraint so as to avoid further civilian casualties and the destruction of vital infrastructure. Equally, we call on the Palestinians to stop firing rockets into Israel. From our experience, the

only lesson that we have been able to learn from such retaliatory actions over the past decades is that they merely give rise to more violence.

The draft resolution presented by Qatar deserves serious consideration by the Council. The Security Council should call for an immediate ceasefire and call for the establishment of a United Nations observer force to supervise the ceasefire. The Security Council has been seized with this matter for more than 40 years. Its failure to find a lasting solution to the crisis has denied hope to the people of Palestine. Without hope, the people in the region will believe that they have no other recourse but to engage in more violence and counter-violence.

It is of concern that every time there is progress, those that do not want change use the opportunity to make the situation worse. In that regard, the international community must accept its responsibility and relaunch the peace process.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our unwavering support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel, with both States enjoying secure and internationally recognized borders. The vision of a two State solution, as enshrined in Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), and the principle of land for peace must, therefore, underpin any permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked to make a further statement. I give that representative the floor to make his statement.

Mr. Carmon (Israel): As we took part in consultations today, more Qassam rockets were launched by terrorists in Gaza towards the town of Sderot, and other areas in southern Israel. Three persons were wounded and four more persons were treated for shock — and we speak only of today — yet another day of terrorist attacks from Gaza.

As some of the representatives here today referred to the present, i.e., to ongoing Israeli activity, I thought it would be only right to update them on the actual facts. As we spoke today, more terror was launched against my country.

Today, we have been dealing with the escalation of the situation in our region, due to the increased terrorist activities against Israel, and Israel's self-defence response, and, in light of the tragic event yesterday that we have been talking about; we have heard pretty hard remarks on a complicated issue and a very complicated situation.

Among the things we have heard here today, I must refer to two specific presentations that I think are completely unacceptable coming from the representatives of two Member States of this Organization. Responsibility for the pressing changes in the reality on the ground discussed this morning belongs to the Palestinian Authority — and we have explained that — it is nevertheless clear that extremists are also being urged by outside forces acting for their own selfish agenda.

Many in this Chamber would not argue that extremists, such as Hamas, are fuelled by Syria and Iran, who indirectly orchestrate chaos in Gaza, Lebanon and probably elsewhere behind the scenes. Let me remind them that Syria is still being investigated by this very Council for perpetrating such activity in Lebanon. Let me remind you that Syria is home to countless terrorist organizations and leaders, in particular Khaled Mashaal, the exiled leader of Hamas who maliciously undermines any progress and stalls all efforts towards peace. Mashaal's most recent vicious theatrics, taking — as they say — an offer he could not refuse to thwart negotiations on the release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, confirm his relentless objectives to obstruct and destroy all prospects for peace. Note also that Mashaal resides in the capital of Syria. To receive a lecture from the representative of Syria on who should or should not be part of the international community completely surpasses the limits of the regular cynicism we have been accustomed to.

As far as Iran is concerned, that Government is led by a President who denies the Holocaust, while preparing the next one — acquiring the capabilities to do so — while making an open call to wipe Member States off the map. As if that were not enough, Iran's infamy was reconfirmed for us again last week, when Argentina, a member of the Council, called for judicial arrest warrants of Syrian and Iranian political officials, including a former president, in connection with the 1994 attack on the Amia Jewish Community Centre in Buenos Aires, which killed 85 people and wounded 300 more. Another blatant act of terrorism, carried out by Hizbollah in 1992 — destroying the Israeli embassy

in Buenos Aires, killing 22 people and wounding hundreds — also originated in Tehran.

It is clear that Iran is not just a destabilizing influence in the region. The international community must take steps to nullify the ongoing threat posed by Iran to world peace and stability, as well as its long-standing policy of sponsoring terrorist organizations.

Finally, Syria and Iran, by financing terror and harbouring terrorists, are trying to divert international attention from their own problems, as they already did once before this year, during the summer conflict in Lebanon. They have reconfirmed for the Council in no uncertain terms why the danger from Damascus and Tehran must be stopped before it is too late.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The observer of Palestine has asked to make a further statement, and I give him the floor.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I did not ask for the floor to make another statement with regard to some of the issues that have been discussed in this body. Of course, I could very easily make comments about those things. For example, I could talk about the Prime Minister of Israel, who stated again today that aggression against Gaza would continue and that what he called "accidents" — similar to what happened in Beit Hanoun — would most likely be repeated. That means that he is completely disregarding this debate among almost all countries from every corner of the globe.

I could also refer to the actions of the Israeli Government with regard to extremism. While President Abbas is trying to create a unified Government on the Palestine side and to prepare the atmosphere for a resumption of negotiations, what are the actions of the Israeli Government? It was only the other day that a Deputy Prime Minister — and we know his name; I do not need to mention it — was added to the Government. His positions are very well known: he is a segregationist and an advocate of ethnic cleansing.

If one wanted to derail this debate in the Security Council by raising those issues, one could do so very easily. But I have not taken the floor to exercise the right of reply; I asked for the floor simply to say that we thank all delegations that have conveyed condolences to the families of the victims of the massacre and to the Palestinian leadership. We will convey those messages to the families, to our people and to the leadership.

We also urge all members of the Security Council to adopt the draft resolution before them as soon as possible. We would prefer that they adopt it today, if they are ready to act. But, whatever the case, we urge them to act on the draft resolution as quickly as possible. We hope that, this time, the Council will not let our people down. We hope that the Council will be able to adopt the draft resolution in order to send the appropriate message to everyone in the Middle East, including the Israeli occupying authorities and the Palestinian people.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested the floor to make a further statement, and I call upon him now.

Mr. Darwish (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): What the representative of Israel said in his most recent statement before the Council reflects very clearly the fact that falsification and distortion are part and parcel of the nature of that occupying regime, which unfairly established its state on the land of others, carried out murder and destruction and practised the most brutal forms of collective crime in modern history. The words of the representative of Israel do not cover the horrific nature of the criminal practices of his regime. The statements of most delegations that spoke at this important meeting made it crystal clear that condemnation is only the minimal reaction to the Israeli regime. The Security Council must effectively stand up against all forms of terrorism, murder and massacre carried out by that unjust regime, which rejects opportunities for peace, while using pretexts of which it is often the main cause. Without occupation, murder, deportation, destruction, the uprooting of trees and the most brutal forms of tyranny, we would not be witnessing what is happening now.

Resolving this problem in a just and comprehensive manner will spare us all this endless controversy, which is due to Israel's obstinate refusal to accept the olive branch that has been extended to it, because its political doctrine is not, apparently, consistent with the essence of a just and comprehensive peace.

What the representative of Israel said has become a tedious rumination. The offices of Hamas in Damascus are press offices, and Hamas, as everybody knows, is a Government elected by the Palestinian people, who are waging resistance. As to what he said

about Lebanon, we would like to ask: who benefits the most from what happened in Lebanon? I believe that the answer is clear and easily understood.

The best evidence of the brutality of Israel's current action is the anger that it has caused on the Arab street, and even on the streets worldwide. As the Security Council meets, a demonstration is now taking place in front of the Israeli Mission, condemning the behaviour of the occupying state and exposing its lies and consistently false claims.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.